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BORROWING TROUBLE.

A FOLK-TALE common and often quoted by country people belonging to the States of New York and Ohio, in ridicule of those who unnecessarily "borrow trouble," is as follows:—

Once there was a girl. One day her mother came into the kitchen and found the girl sitting crying with all her heart. The mother said, "Why, what is the matter?" The girl replied, "Oh, I was thinking. And I thought how some day perhaps I might be married and how I might have a baby, and then I thought how one day when it would be asleep in its cradle the oven lid would fall on it and kill it," and she began to cry again.

A variant from Greenfield, Mass., which can be traced back fifty years, runs thus:—

A girl sat on a river bank crying. On being asked the cause of her grief, she replied, "Oh, I was thinking if I had a darter and my darter had a darter and she should fall into the warter, how dreadful it would be."

Both of these folk-jests are probably fragmentary survivals of a popular European folk-tale. In Mr. Joseph Jacobs's volume of "English Fairy Tales," the tale of "The Three Sillies" is a well-sustained story, having exactly the same *motif* as that which gives point to both of the very brief stories that I have found in the United States. In the English folk-tale the girl goes to the cellar to draw beer, and falls to crying after indulging in fancies similar to those of the girl in our American stories. There is a Scotch variant of the tale. Grimm's "Clever Elsie" is very similar to the English version of this old folk-tale. There is also more than one Russian variant. In "Bastianelo," No. 93, in Crane's "Italian Popular Tales," a bride goes down cellar to draw wine, and muses in the same manner. It is interesting to note little details that relate to the various environments where the tale takes root and becomes a part of the local folk-lore. In Germany and England, it is while drawing beer that the maiden falls into soliloquy. In Italy it is wine, the national beverage, that runs away while the girl goes on with her idle dreaming. In New York and Ohio, where the great brick ovens were so often built into the wall beside the kitchen chimney, it is the oven lid that will fall and kill the sleeping child. The Western Massachusetts variant, told in the midst of the great meadows over which meander their rivers, describes the girl as sitting on a river bank while she worries over the drowning of her future grandchild. These stories are told in the United States as true, and the incidents are generally supposed to have happened long ago in the same neighborhood.

Within a few months I took down from the verbal narration of a young Armenian woman a folk-tale called "My Son Ali," with which she had been familiar from her childhood. To me it seems the most interesting form I have yet found of this tale, so widely disseminated, whose heroine is a girl or woman who weeps violently over some hypothetical disaster that is to happen to a child as yet unborn. The incident narrated in "My Son Ali" of a horse being gotten away from its owner, in order to carry necessities to some one in heaven, occurs in "Not a Pin to Choose" between them, one of Dasent's "Popular Tales from the Norse," also in Grimm's "Wise Folks."

MY SON ALI.

Once upon a time there was a girl whose name was Fatima, who lived with her mother and brother, for her father was dead. Not far from the house there flowed a river. Twice each day, early in the morning and at evening, Fatima took a large copper vessel, and went to the river to bring fresh drinking-water to the house. Early one beautiful morning she went as usual to bring her kettle of fresh water. She sat down under a great mulberry-tree which overhung the river. It was full of ripe fruit which hung far above her head. As she sat there enjoying the beautiful early morning and looking up into the tree laden with fine fruit which she, being a girl, could not reach, since she could not climb the tree, she fell a-thinking.

She thought how some day perhaps she would be married and perhaps would have a little son and his name would be Ali, and after a time he would grow to be eight years old, and that then he could go to the river to bring fresh water in the morning. Then she thought how, when Ali had come to the mulberry-tree, he would climb up into the tree to pluck the delicious berries, and how at last the poor little boy would fall from the tree into the river and be drowned.

Then Fatima sprang up crying, "Oh! Ali! Ali! My son! My son Ali!" and she ran home crying aloud, "My son Ali, my son Ali is dead!"

As she ran along the street the people came out calling to her and asking what was the matter. She did not stop, but ran on crying, "Ali! Ali! My son Ali! My son Ali is dead!" until she reached her own home.

Her mother, seeing the water vessel empty, and hearing her daughter crying aloud, said, "What is the matter? Why are you weeping? Why have you brought no fresh water this morning?"

Then the girl told her mother how she had sat under the mulberry-tree, and had thought that perhaps some day she would be married and would have a little son and his name would be Ali, and when he

had come to be eight years old he would go to draw the water for the family, and he would see the ripe mulberries hanging from the tree and would climb the tree to gather them, and he would fall into the river and be drowned, and again she burst out, "Oh! Ali! My son Ali! My son Ali is dead!"

Then the mother also burst out crying, and the two sat there all day lamenting and weeping over the poor, drowned Ali.

Late in the afternoon there came to the door begging bread a Chingana woman (gypsy). When she heard the great outcry and saw the two women weeping she asked, "What is the matter?"

The mother told her the story, how her daughter had gone to draw water from the river, had sat down under the mulberry-tree, and all that she had imagined, how she came home crying, and how ever since they had been grieving over the lost Ali.

The gypsy said, "I can tell you about your son, for you know my people can not only read the past and the future, but can see into the other world and tell what is going on there."

"Oh," cried Fatima, springing up. "Can you give me some word of my son? Where is he? How is he? Is he happy? Is he well? How old is he?" And she stopped crying, and danced, laughing, about the room in expectation of hearing about her dear lost Ali.

Then the cunning old Chingana said, "I see your son. He is now about twelve years old. He is not well. He is very poor and hungry. If any one should give him one piece of bread, he would be so glad that he would jump ten times for joy. He is lying down, faint and weak, wanting food; but if you will give me food I will carry it to him, and soon he will be well and strong."

Then the mother and daughter made themselves very busy preparing food to send by the Chingana woman to little Ali. Fatima hurried out to the shop to buy nuts and fruit. The mother brought some saddle-bags, which they packed with bread and all kinds of delicacies. They also put in clothes that they thought a twelve-year-old boy could wear.

By the time that all was ready the saddle-bags were so heavy that the Chingana said she could not carry them. She was very cunning, and as she had entered the house she had seen a fine horse standing in its stall at the side of the house. This horse belonged to Fatima's brother. The old woman said, "Have you not a horse that you could lend me to ride upon to carry the saddle-bags to your Ali, for he is suffering, and I should hasten to bear your presents to him?"

"Yes, yes," cried Fatima and her mother. "We have a horse," and they hurried to lead forth the horse to the front of the house. The saddle-bags were placed on the horse, and the old woman mounted and rode away.

Not long after she left, Fatima's brother came home from his work. As he approached the house he heard great crying, for the women had again begun to weep after the departure of the Chingana. The brother heard his sister crying, "Ali! Ali! My son Ali is dead!" He came in, saying, "What is the matter? Where is my horse? Why are you crying like this?"

Then Fatima and her mother together told him the sad story, how his sister had gone to the river to draw water, how she had sat under the tree and all she had imagined, and how she had come home crying, and how they were grieving over the poor drowned Ali.

But he said, "Where is my horse? Tell me, where is my horse?"

Then they told him of the visit of the Chingana, and how they had sent food to Ali, whom she had seen suffering.

The brother said, "Tell me quick! which way did she go?" and he scolded his sister for crying and being so foolish. They pointed out the direction taken by the gypsy woman, and the brother ran on at full speed.

In about half an hour he came to a mill. He stopped here, thinking that the miller might give him information about the Chingana woman, who, he felt sure, meant to steal his horse.

Now when the Chingana had reached the mill, fearing she might be overtaken, she had stopped and asked the miller to change clothes with her, and to conceal the horse in his stable. The miller was not a very wise man, and consented to do as the Chingana asked; so when Fatima's brother came to him, the miller was wearing the dress of the old woman as he worked at grinding the corn. The brother quickly spied the horse in a stall underneath the house, and as he talked with the miller, questioning him about the Chingana woman, he said, "Why, you are wearing the dress my sister described. You must have on the clothes of the gypsy." Just then, lifting his eyes, he saw in a tall tree above him a man looking down. This was the Chingana woman, for after putting on the clothes of the miller she had climbed the tree, hoping to conceal herself in the branches. The brother then told the miller he must confess the whole truth, for he felt sure that he knew all about the thief. After some urging, the miller told him how the Chingana woman had come to him, and asked him to change clothes and to conceal the horse. This he had done, meaning no harm. He then led out the horse, which the brother took possession of, but this did not satisfy him. He said the Chingana woman must go to prison. He bade the woman come down from the tree, but she refused to do this until officers came and commanded her to descend. She was then led away to prison.

The brother mounted his horse and returned home. When he

reached home the women were still crying. He said to Fatima, "Are you not ashamed to sit here crying and talking of your lost son Ali? You have no son; you are a young girl. You should be ashamed to be so foolish, and to cry aloud about your son Ali." His words had no effect upon Fatima, who continued to weep and cry aloud. At last the brother drove her out of the house, saying, "You shall not longer live in my house, you foolish girl, who sit crying about your son Ali."

Fatima, weeping, went away to one of the neighbors, with whom she stayed two days. Then she came back, begging her brother's forgiveness, asking to be allowed to come back to her home, and promising that she would be quiet and gentle as before. She said, "I am sorry that I was so foolish. I did not know what I was about. I hope you will forgive me." This he did, and they lived in peace forever after.

I see a small basket coming down from heaven. In it there are twelve pomegranates, five for me, one for you, Josephine, one for you, Pailoun, one for you, Arousyak, one for you, Diran, one for you, Augustina, one for you, Naomi, and one for you, George.

The Armenian story-teller often ends the tale with some such formula as the above, always keeping the larger share of the fruit for himself, and doling out the rest to each one of the listeners to whom he points. The narrator looks up suddenly at the end of the tale and lifts his hands as if he sees the fruit descending. When he finishes, the audience clap their hands and laugh. Of course the kind of fruit and the number varies according to the pleasure of the narrator. The tales are often told by the old people, by family servants, or by the children themselves, while a number of people, either children or grown people, are gathered about a brazier on winter evenings; or during summer nights, when the family have gone to their beds on the roof-tops, where they sleep during the hot months spent in the vineyards, some one tells a story while the others sit or lie on their beds looking up at the star-lit sky. Another favorite time for telling old tales is when the peasants are removing the cotton from the pod. This work is often done in the evening. Sometimes the workers sit out of doors, keeping a little fire from some of the dried pods of the cotton, or perhaps if it is quite cool they gather about a fire indoors.

Fanny D. Bergen.